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ABSTRACT

While the percentage of women and minorities in leadership positions is growing, the numbers are still not representative of the population at large. The 49 community colleges in Illinois enroll 62% of the state's minority college students. Five of these colleges (10%) have minority presidents, all of whom are African American. There are no Hispanic community college presidents in Illinois, although in Chicago, 20% of the total population and 27% of the community college student population are Hispanic. There are only four Hispanic deans, none of whom are deans of instruction. This is due in part to the low number of qualified candidates. However, very few of those who qualify for top-level positions are ever offered such positions. Two colleges in Illinois serve as examples of institutions whose leaders were determined to fill top administrative positions with individuals who would best meet the future needs of their diverse student populations. The president of Harry S. Truman College, located in the multi-ethnic, multi-racial Uptown Chicago, hired an African American, a Native American, and a Hispanic to fill three of seven top administrative positions. Women and minorities also hold a significant number of lower-level administrative positions at Truman College. Parkland Community College, which is located in a culturally and racially diverse, but predominantly white community, made a special effort to recruit women and minority candidates for the college presidency. The board hired a black woman as president based on her superior qualifications. Overcoming the prejudices and biases that may serve as barriers to hiring qualified minorities requires dominant groups to understand that cultural and gender differences indeed produce new and different leadership styles, but that these styles are valid and much needed. (PAA)

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THE CHANGING FACE OF LEADERSHIP: THE ROLE OF HISPANICS.

By

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July 10, 1990

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Paper presented at the Annual International Conference on Leadership Development of the League for Innovation in Community Colleges, "Leadership 2000" (2nd, San Francisco, CA, July 8-11, 1990).

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The Changing Face of Leadership: The Role of Hispanics

Isn't it great to attend a national conference for leaders and see so many women and minorities in attendance? It wasn't too long ago that women, African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans and Asian Americans were scarce or nonexistent at professional meetings. Our numbers are still below what they should be, but we are here today in sufficient numbers to make our presence known and felt.

While we rejoice at the changing face of leadership, we must not lose sight of the fact that across the nation, the number of women and minorities in leadership positions in colleges and universities is still not representative of our numbers in the population at large, nor of the number of women and minority students we serve. According to the American Council on Education, approximately 18 percent of all college and university students in the United States are minorities, while only 12 percent of all administrators are minorities. Among the 12 percent minority administrators, 7.6 percent are African-Americans, 2 percent Hispanic, 1.5 percent Asian; and 0.4 percent are Native American. Talk about underrepresentation! Incidentally, 58 percent of all higher education administrators are men. Since males comrpsie less than 50 percent of the total student population, they are the only minority group that is overrepresented among administrators (Minorities in Higher Education, 1988).

I was asked to share with you what is happening in my state regarding the changing face of leadership in community colleges, with participar emphasis on the role of Hispanics. If I were to speak only about Hispanic top administrators in the state's community colleges, I would only need one hand to calculate the data and two minutes to explain it to you. For this reason, I will also refer to the status of minority leaders in general - not just Hispanics. In this way, I will use both my hands and speak a little longer. I think you can already anticipate what I am about to say.

Hispanic/minority leadership in Illinois

Illinois has 49 community colleges and these enroll 62 percent of the state's minority college students. Not surprisingly, the majority of these students are concentrated in urban centers, such as Chicago, Joliet and East St. Louis. Of the 49 colleges, five (or 10%) have presidents who are minorities. All five are African American. Three presidents are in Chicago, one in East St. Louis and one in Champaign. Dr. Zelema Harris, who was recently named president of Parkland College in Champaign, is worthy of note because, in addition to being African American, she is also the only woman community college president in Illinois, outside of Chicago. Three of the state's 49 community college presidents are now women and two of them are African American; the third is white. Two of the women presidents are in Chicago and one in Champaign.

I would like to add that the chancellor of the City Colleges of Chicago is also a woman and an African American. This makes four women and six African Americans (three of them women) in top level positions in Illinois community colleges.

Based on what I have just said, you now know that there are no Hispanic

community college presidents in Illinois- not even in Chicago where Hispanics comprise 20 percent of the total population and 27 percent of the community college student population. There is only one Hispanic vice president - yours truly- and there is one Hispanic vice chancellor in the City Colleges of Chicago District office.

There are perhaps four Hispanic deans in the entire state, but none are deans of instruction. This is significant because the next step up for vice presidents and deans of instruction is the presidency, so this means that the pool of candidates for selecting a Hispanic community college president in Illinois is extremely limited, unless, of course, candidates are drawn from lower level positions or from other states, where the pool, according to some researchers, is not much larger (Vaughn, 1990).

Why such a gloomy picture?

One reason for the dearth of Hispanic candidates for top level administrative positions is that the number of minorities, especially Hispanics, who qualify for administrative positions in higher education is limited. In 1988, only 5 percent of all graduate students were African American and only 3 percent were Hispanic. But another important reason is that very few of those who qualify are ever offered top level positions. Oh yes, they are invited to apply, but often it is to make affirmative action reports look good; they are rarely considered seriously for presidencies, vice presidencies, or even academic deanships.

Obviously much needs to be done to increase the number of minorities who receive graduate degrees since they will comprise the pool of candidates needed to diversify our campus leadership. It is beyond the scope of this presentation to discuss those strategies, but it is to the point to say

that not enough is being done to make it possible for those who qualify to become deans of instruction, vice presidents and presidents. Precisely because their numbers are limited, an extraordinary effort must be made to identify, reach out, and welcome minorities into the college community leadership circle.

Unfortunately not all community college boards or presidents are convinced that their institutions will be well served by someone who does not manifest the characteristics of today's typical college administrators - white, male, middle class, mainstream American background (Vaughn, 1990). There are exceptions, of course.

A tale of two colleges

Let me tell you about two exceptions in Illinois. This is a tale of two colleges, whose leaders were determined to fill top leadership positions with individuals whose qualifications would best meet the current and future needs of their institutions - regardless of their ethnic or racial backgrounds.

Harry S Truman College, one of the City Colleges of Chicago, is the most multi-ethnic and racially diverse institution in Illinois: 20% of the students are Asian; 19% are Black (not just African American, but also freom Africa and the Caribbean); 14% are Hispanic, 1.5% are Native American and the remainder are white, meaning American whites, Middle Easterners, and Eastern Europeans. Interestingly, the most recent group of newcomers is comprised of 1300 Soviet Jews.

In order to meet the needs of such a diverse student population, Truman's president, Dr. Wallace B. Appelson, has gone out of his way to create a culturally and racially diverse administrative staff. For example,

of the top seven administrators, at the deans level and above, three are minorities - an African-American, a Native American, and a Hispanic - and 5 of the 7 are women. Women and minorities, including Asians, also hold a significant number of lower level administrative positions where they are gaining the experience and expertise needed to become eligible for higher level positions at some future date.

(Unfortunately, the faculty does not reflect the same diversity as the administrative or student population. Only 10 percent are minority and less than 40 percent are women. Since 95 percent of the faculty are full-time and there is a freeze on hiring, there is not much we can do to change this. We have to wait until the freeze is lifted so we can hire new faculty to replace those who retire.)

One might argue that Truman College is located in Uptown Chicago, a multi-ethnic and multi-racial community, where the number of immigrants and minorities provides a large pool of possible candidates for administrative positions. But the majority of our administrators do not live in the neighborhood. In order to achieve the desired diversity among administrators and staff, the president has had to go out of the community and even the city to find the right candidates.

When the vice president (a white male) retired two-and-a-half years ago, a national search for his replacement was conducted. I was president of a small college in Puerto Rico at the time and wanted to return to the states. I responded to the announcement in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and of 45 candidates, some of whom also were minorities, I was considered the best qualified by the search committee and the president. However, when they submitted my name to the Central Administration and the Board, there encountered some resistence to my appointment. Some felt

that the candidate should be more familiar with state-side Community Colleges than I was, since most of my experience had been acquired in Puerto Rico. They did not realize that the Puerto Rican higher education system is modeled after the U.S. system and they had not read my résumé carefully enough to know that I was born and raised in New York, educated in the states, and had worked closely for several years with several community colleges on the mainland. Others objected to the fact that I was a woman because they felt that Truman College already had an excess of women administrators. The fact that for many, many years the administrators of the City Colleges of Chicago had been exclusively male did not seem to be inconsistent. For several weeks, I did not know whether I would be offered the position or not. However, the president and the search committee persisted and their recommendation prevailed.

The Board of Trustees of Parkland Community College in Champaign, Illinois were just as determined to find the best possible candidate to serve as the new president of their institution. As you know, Champaign is the home of the University of Illinois, and although the community is culturally and racially diverse, minorities are not in the majority as in Chicago or East St. Louis. The Board advertised in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and sent letters to educational leaders across the country, asking them to recommend candidates, especially women and minorities. They then wrote to those recommended and asked them to consider applying for the position. As they reviewed over 100 applications, they came across one that clearly was superior to all the others. This ideal candidate was a sitting president and a nationally recognized educational leader. The candidate was also a woman and she was Black. Now, Parkland Community College had never had a minority nor a woman president before, and it would take some doing to

convince all the Board members and local leaders that Dr. Zelema Harris would provide the kind of leadership that would maintain Parkland's standards of excellence and enhance its image in the community and the nation. The members of the search committee did not demur and she was hired.

It is easy to find excuses for not hiring women, minorities, or anyone who is the slightest bit different from the dominant group. As a result, many institutions are deprived of the variety and richness of the talents that men and women from diverse backgrounds have to offer. Those board members who are enlightened and have been willing to stick their necks out in order to hire presidents and vice presidents with non-traditional backgrounds, can attest to the benefits that diverse leadership brings to their institutions and to their communities.

An apprpriate environment for diverse leaders

I would like to point out, however, that overcoming prejudices and biased attitudes in order to hire qualified minorities for top level administrative positions does not guarantee that these leaders will be able to perform optimally. Board members, faculty and staff must be prepared to work with someone whose leadership style may be different from what they have been used to.

Much has been written about differences in management styles between men and women. Less is known about the diversity in the management styles of individuals with different cultural backgrounds, but we know that such differences also exist. Yet, the on-the-job performance of minorities and women administrators is often judged by uniform standards set by the dominant group, that is, anglo male administrators.

Harvard professor Carol Gilligan has long researched the management styles of men and women. She consistently finds, among other things, that women managers tend to focus on process and relationships, while men managers seem to stress following rules and regulations. As a result, women often perceive their male counterparts to be uncaring and dispassionate while men tend to perceive their female counterparts as emotional and lacking objectivity.

The question that Gilligan and other researchers are now exploring is: how can men and women effectively work together and at the same time respect each other's differences. The solution is not for one or the other to give up their behavioral orientation, but to draw upon that diversity to enhance their effectiveness whenever possible. Indeed, experts in industrial management agree that a combination of male/female management styles are conducive to increased productivity because the needs of the institution as well as the needs of the individuals are met.

On the other hand, when institutions view diversity as a limitation rather than a strength, they are not capitalizing on the full potential of their human resources. Furthermore, when men or women who have been raised in different cultures are forced to abandon deep rooted behavioral patterns, they may not be able to perform optimally because often they are victims of what is referred to as a psychological death.

Carolyn Desjardins, another well-known researcher, recently wrote an article in which she relates the experience of a Hispanic colleague on her campus. This young man had come from a poor family and had worked his way through school, eventually receiving a Ph.D. in counseling psychology. In his current position, he had done all the right things to earn a raise in salary, rank promotion, and so forth. This meant that had earned the acceptance of

his peers, who were primarily white males.

One day he confided to Carolyn, that in spite of his achievements, he often felt "hallow" and that when he shared this feeling with his Hispanic friends, many of them said they felt the same way. He was relieved to find out, through Carolyn, that women who give up certain feminine attributes in order to succeed in a male dominated society, also experience hallowness. He understood that the root of his problem was that in the process of achieving professional goals, he had had to supress a great deal of his "Hispanicness." For example, he had not attended the funeral of a favorite cousin because he had felt that his colleagues would not perceive that as an acceptable absence. Now he realized, that only by being themselves - that is, free to do the things that are important to them - could he and his friends fill the void in their lives.

I wish them well. Acting "Hispanic" in certain situations can create problems unless that action is interpreted correctly by sensitive colleagues and supervisors. While I was in Puerto Rico, a non-Puerto Rican manager of a factory and personal friend, was distressed because he had just lost an excellent Puerto Rican employee. Through the grape vine the manager learned that the employee had resigned because he felt he was not appreciated. He was married, his wife had just had a baby, and he needed more money. Yet, he did not ask for a raise because he felt that his boss (the manager) should have recognized his worth and his need and offered the raise without his having to ask for it. When the raise was not forthcoming, he resigned - and the company lost an excellent employee.

I would like to share with you another example of the need for cultural sensistivity, although it does not have to do with Hispanics. Several months ago I was invited to a midwestern university to serve as a consultant to a

committee that was charged with developing a plan for making their campus more culturally diverse, prior to a visit from an NCA accreditation evaluation team. The chairperson of the committee was from Ethiopia, but had lived in the states for 15 years. A member of the committee picked me up at the hotel and on the way explained to me how disappointed the committee members had been with the chairperson at first. He seemed disorganized; he let the members ramble on at the meetings, and did not appear to provide any direction to the group. After several months of seemingly not accomplishing anything, the members were about to ask for his resignation when he suddenly summarized all their suggestions into a meaningful pattern. Everything fell into place and they were surprised at how much they had accomplished after all.

If institutions are to reap the rewards of diverse leadership, there must be an understanding of where leaders with different backgrounds are coming from. What their values are. What their orientation toward work is. It takes patience, flexibility and an open mind for culturally diverse people to work together as a team. But the rewards are great for the individual and the institution and, I might add, for our nation.

Diverse leadership - a national imperative

Given the changing demographics of the United States and the shifting global challenges facing our nation, it does not make sense to think in terms of a homogeneous educational community any longer. Did you know that by the year 2000 - only ten years down the road - there will be at least 30 million Hispanics in the United States? Hispanics not only are the fastest growing minority group, but they are the youngest and will thus comprise 39 percent of the workforce by the turn of the century. Will they be prepared to

meet the labor and leadership needs of our country?

Our educational institutions must provide environments where Hispanic young people can learn and develop their potential to the fullest. Role models and sensitive administrators, faculty and staff are a must. Cultural diversity at all levels must be viewed as a positive rather than a disruptive force in higher education. The changing face of leadership in our community colleges in particular, is a demographic and national imperative. Increasing the number of Hispanics and other minorities in top level administrative positions is not an ideal toward which we must strive; it is a compelling need that must be satisfied.

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